



Seattle's Comprehensive Plan Update

ISSUE PAPER #4: IMPROVING THE LAND USE ELEMENT

1. Recommendations

The land use element includes the foundation for the rest of the Comprehensive Plan. The Urban Village strategy is a strategy that builds on Seattle's character and infrastructure to focus growth in mixed-use pedestrian and transit-friendly neighborhoods, in order to achieve a sustainable future for the city. Three changes to the current Land Use element could help to emphasize and explain the sustainability aspects of the Urban Village strategy, and create a document that's easier to read and use, without significantly changing the direction of the element:

Split the Land Use Element

The Land Use element currently includes the urban village strategy, which shapes how growth will be accommodated in the city and provides a foundation for ensuring that infrastructure will be available to support that growth. The element also provides the policy foundation for the City's land use regulations. Separating the urban village strategy and growth topics from the land use regulatory framework, can help to emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of the urban village strategy. Rather than labeling the urban village strategy as a "land use" issue, the urban village strategy would be highlighted as the foundation for the rest of the Comprehensive Plan in its own Urban Village element.

Improve consistency across topics

In discussing both the Urban Village strategy and the land use regulatory framework, there is a lack of consistency in format and ordering of topics. Providing a logical structure that allows for the same treatment of a topic across areas can help the reader to compare across different types of areas. This will aid in understanding the differences in the intent of different categories of uses and village types.

Provide more discussion to guide the reader

Currently the Comprehensive Plan briefly describes the conditions desired in urban villages. The Plan does not fully describe the urban village strategy and how that strategy is intended to guide a variety of City actions. More discussion of the urban village strategy and how it provides a foundation for the future sustainability of the city can go a long way towards providing a more coherent Comprehensive Plan.

2. Background

The Land Use element contains a number of topics. The element's current goals and policies:

- ◆ guide the Urban Village strategy;
- ◆ explain citywide and neighborhood-specific growth expectations;
- ◆ describe the intent of the City's system of land use regulation;
- ◆ direct the enhancement of the city's open space network;
- ◆ explain the City's approach to future annexations, and
- ◆ contain the City's shoreline master program, which guides development along the city's shorelines.

Seattle's Comprehensive Plan builds on a vision of growth that enhances the sustainability of the city. Sustainability refers to the ability to protect and enhance the long-term social, economic, and environmental health of our community. A sustainable culture is able to thrive without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

One way that the City seeks a sustainable future is through the urban village strategy, which brings together the following:

- ◆ small changes in the Seattle's development pattern;
- ◆ a more complete and competitive intermodal public transportation system;
- ◆ targeted use of housing assistance funds and planning tools to provide desirable and affordable housing;
- ◆ investment in facilities and service delivery systems designed to serve higher density neighborhoods; and
- ◆ neighborhood-based decisions built upon local citizens' expressed priorities.

The entire Comprehensive Plan builds on this strategy, but the text of the plan does not make the connections between the strategy and the concept of sustainability explicit.

3. Outline of a revised element

The following outline presents one option for revising the Land Use element to emphasize the two different roles of shaping land use regulations and guiding the city toward sustainable growth. In the following outline, new sections are underlined; *areas where substantial amendment might occur are in italics*. While changes could be made to many of the sections of the Land Use element, most of the following topics are covered by existing goals and policies and most goals and policies would not be amended.

URBAN VILLAGES ELEMENT

A. Urban Village Strategy

Discussion: describes the vision for the City's growth - the urban village strategy and its support for a sustainable future; and provides a summary of how each of the Plan's elements supports the Urban Village strategy.

Goals and policies: Broad goals the city plans to achieve through the urban village strategy, broad policies relating to implementation of the urban village strategy

A-1. Categories of Urban Villages

Goals and policies: general characteristics desired for all urban villages and base criteria for designating any urban village category

Urban Centers

Goals and policies: criteria for designating urban centers and the general characteristics desired for urban centers

Manufacturing/Industrial Centers

Goals and policies: criteria for designating manufacturing/industrial centers and the general characteristics desired for M/I centers

Hub Urban Villages

Goals and policies: criteria for designating an area a hub urban village and the general characteristics desired for hub villages. New density goals for hub urban villages may be added to mirror density goals for urban centers and residential urban villages.

Residential Urban Villages

Goals and policies: criteria for designating residential urban villages and the general characteristics desired for residential villages

A-2. Areas Outside of Centers and Urban Villages

Goals and policies: general vision for all areas outside of villages

Neighborhood Anchors

Goals and policies: criteria for designating an area a neighborhood anchor and the general characteristics desired for anchors

B. Distribution of Growth

Goals and policies: *Citywide and possibly village level growth targets and the urban village growth monitoring strategy*

C. Open Space Network

Goals and policies: Set out the goals for parks and open space to serve the urban village strategy. *Policies related to urban trails and green streets would be consolidated in the Transportation element.*

D. Annexation

Policies: describing the types of areas the City would consider annexing, and the city's potential annexation areas

LAND USE ELEMENT

A. The System of Land Use Regulation

Discussion: What is land use? How does the Land Use element fit into the City's regulatory environment and the Urban Village Strategy?

A-1. General Area Designations/Future Land Use Map

Goals and policies: describing how to use the future land use map, *what the different elements of the map mean, and criteria for designating different uses on the map (goals and policies describing Major Institutions and City-Owned Open Space are being considered for this section.)*

A-2. Citywide Land Use Provisions

Discussion: What is the relationship between the land use policies and land use regulations? How do the Citywide Land Use Provisions relate to the Land Use Classifications? Goals and policies in this section include those items where the City's policy is generally the same citywide, or where the policies are the same for more than one classification.

Goals and policies in this section provide guidance on topics where the City's policy is the same across land use classifications.

Rezones

Goals and policies: describe considerations for rezones that are the same citywide. May include new policies based on language that is currently in the land use code. Detailed rezone criteria which are sprinkled throughout the Land Use element would be removed, as that language is already in the Rezone Section of the Land Use and Zoning Code (Chapter 23.34). Instead, the Comprehensive Plan would provide broader policy guidance regarding the appropriate location of specific zones for all zones or zone categories.

Uses

Goals and policies: *generally describe how uses are regulated (for example, under each zone category, the city permits some uses outright, permits other uses under specified conditions, and prohibits other uses.) This section would include the current telecommunications policies.*

Development Standards

Goals and policies: *provide guidance for development standards that are treated similarly across more than one land use classification (for example, noise policies are generally the same across all zones except industrial zones.)* This section may include new language regarding protection of trees, based on language that is currently in the land use code.

Parking

Goals and policies: provide general guidance regarding how parking is to be regulated on private property. Parking policies related to on-street parking are to be contained in the Transportation element.

Design review

Goals and policies: Current policy that describes the City's tool to provide flexibility so that development can better fit into its neighborhood context.

Zoning Overlays

Goals and policies: Current policies that describes the zoning tools that the City uses to address specific local conditions.

Planned Developments

Goals and policies: Current policies that describe the City's policies to allow master planned development under specific conditions in some areas.

Historic Preservation

Goals and policies: encourage the preservation of historic structures and districts.

Public Facilities and Institutions

Goals and policies: describe how the City will regulate public facilities and institutions in order to permit them to grow and thrive while minimizing their impacts on the surrounding neighborhood.

A-3. Land Use Classifications

Discussion: What are the land use classifications? What are these policies intended to achieve?

Single-Family Areas

Goals and policies: describe the intent of single-family areas. *The current distinction between low-density and high-density single-family area does not have any influence over the single-family area regulations, and will be considered for removal.*

Multifamily Residential Areas

Goals and policies: describe the intent of different multifamily areas. *This section would be reorganized to clarify the areas to which each policy applies.*

Mixed Use Commercial Areas

Goals and policies: *describe the intent of commercial areas. This section may be amended if the ongoing commercial code review suggests a new approach to regulating uses in commercial areas. In addition, policies guiding regulations in specific zones may be added, to mirror multifamily and industrial area sections.*

Industrial Areas

Goals and policies: describe the intent of industrial areas. *This section would be reorganized to clarify the areas to which each policy applies.*

Downtown Areas

Discussion: would refer the reader to the Downtown Urban Center Neighborhood Plan for specific goals and policies related to Downtown land uses.

Goals and policies: broadly describe the types of downtown areas the regulations are intended to create.

Major Institutions Overlay Areas

Goals and policies: describe the intent of goals and policies related to Major Institutions. *This section may be reorganized.*

B. Environmentally Critical Areas

Description: describe what the Environmentally Critical Areas (ECAs) are, how ECAs are identified, and clarify the relationship of ECA regulations to Land Use and Shoreline regulations

Goals and policies: describe the City's general approach to regulating development in ECAs. Goals and policies for each of the following sections would describe the City's general approach to regulating development in that type of area:

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|-----------------------------------|---|
| ◆ <u>Landslide-Prone Areas</u> | ◆ <u>Steep Slopes</u> |
| ◆ <u>Liquefaction-prone Areas</u> | ◆ <u>Fish and Wildlife Habitat Areas</u> |
| ◆ <u>Flood-prone Areas</u> | ◆ <u>Abandoned Landfills</u> |
| ◆ <u>Riparian Corridors</u> | ◆ <u>Sites Contaminate With Hazardous Waste</u> |
| ◆ <u>Wetlands</u> | |

C. Shorelines

This section is not proposed to change at this time. Topics covered in this section include:

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|------------------------|---|
| ◆ Shoreline Use | ◆ History, Culture, Restoration and Enhancement |
| ◆ Shoreline Access | ◆ Process |
| ◆ Transportation | ◆ Area Objectives for Seattle's Shorelines |
| ◆ Conservation | ◆ Height in the Shoreline District |
| ◆ Economic Development | |
| ◆ Recreation | |

The current Land Use element is available on-line at
<http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/planning/comprehensive/homecp.htm>